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<i>Lost Illusions, Anglo-American Style, article by C. Richard Cleary</i>	3
<i>Poems by Cecilia Meireles, translated from the Portuguese by D. M. Pettinella</i>	20
<i>Two Poems, by Michael Paul Novak</i>	22
<i>I Have This Uneasy Feeling, story by Ralph Hayes</i>	23
<i>The Great Divide, poem by Frances Colvin</i>	30
<i>The Home Place, poem by John C. Evans</i>	31
<i>Highway Man, poem by Martin Galvin</i>	32
<i>Transmutations, poem by T. Alan Broughton</i>	33
<i>Three Poems, by Nina Sandrich</i>	34
<i>And Meet Your Maker There, story by Thomas A. West, Jr.</i>	36
<i>My Father's Chair, poem by Joseph E. Meredith</i>	48

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Marginalia . . .

Our cover story may surprise some readers more accustomed to finding fiction and other literary forms of illusion our specialty. But C. Richard Cleary's revealing analysis of one set of illusions behind international relations reminds us that myth-making is not confined to literature.

Today some of our most time-honored illusions seem almost to have been dreams. That was, after all, President Nixon on live TV quoting Chairman Mao and drinking toasts to the Chinese. For a great many Americans who have lived for years with the notion that the real China was on Taiwan, the change must be as hard to swallow as a hundred-year old egg. The suddenness of our departure from the basics of Far Eastern policy over the past twenty years has a certain Orwellian flavor to it. Remember how the government of Oceania in 1984 frequently changed the name of the current adversary; after awhile, most people didn't notice.

* * *

When you read Ralph Hayes' "I Have This Uneasy Feeling" in this issue, we venture to say that you will share his hero's uneasiness. The story dramatizes the problem of communication in a sharply satirical way that is bound to bring a gasp of recognition from most of us. As a friend of ours once put it, "Everyone has sending apparatus but hardly anyone seems to have a receiving set." Difficult as communication between individuals can be, it is sweet harmony compared to the communication gap between the individual and the large company.

Trying to penetrate through barriers of form letters and computer print-outs, one feels very much like one of Steinbeck's Okies in The Grapes of Wrath. Told that "the bank" is foreclosing on his farm, he desperately begs and threatens the bank teller, only to learn that "the bank" is not the teller, not even the president, but "the stockholders." The role of the stockholders is now played by Hal, the computer.

If such thoughts upset you, comfort yourself with the realization that we are still twelve years away from 1984 and there is no sign of Big Brother on the political horizon. Is there?

J. J. K.

Lost Illusions, Anglo-American Style

The Fate of the Special Relationship Since 1945

• C. Richard Cleary

FOR centuries England has been intimately connected with America by the short reaches of the 3000 mile wide Atlantic, and separated from the European continent by the 21 miles of the English Channel. A typical London *Times* news caption declared: "Fog Over Channel; Continent Isolated." This was the Eastward view from London. The Westward view toward the Atlantic was sketched in the oft reiterated dictum of Winston Churchill: "Whenever England must choose between the continent and the open sea (i.e., America), she will always choose the sea." No modern international relationship between great powers has been closer or more durable than the English-American one. This unique partnership was of special value to each—and to the world—during World War II. For more than a decade after the war, popular and prestigious writers could discuss the Anglo-American connection from a teleological perspective, as if it were the pre-destined outcome of everything that had happened since the rupture of 1776. More recently it has become fashionable in sophisticated circles, especially in America, to deride the Special Relationship as an illusion or, at most, an anachronistic burden.

But even prestigious writers and sophisticates sometimes "over-react" to the stroke of the moment, and history has often reversed the judgments of political pundits on the passing scene. With or without predestination (or obsolescence), this special affinity and alignment between the two largest English-speaking nations has been far from being a complete illusion during the past quarter century. The changing fortunes of this relationship have played an important part in the recent history of both countries. Both England and America have experienced special problems as a result of the very specialness of their relationship. It has helped shape the attitude of both nations toward the world in general and the European continent in particular. So substantial has been the political and psychological reality of the peculiar Anglo-American symbiosis that, without it,

neither partner could have for so long sustained certain illusions about the outside world.

Though the full flowering of the Special Relationship was a by-product of World War II, certain patterns in the behavior of each country toward the other had earlier become so deeply enrooted that they might be described as axioms. Indeed, by the end of the 19th century British schoolboys could no longer be taught that Britain had "no permanent friends, only permanent interests." This precept had been superceded by another: for Britain, there could no longer be a question of war against the United States. Subsequently, this notion developed beyond more negative abhorrence of hostilities with America. Long before World War II, the pre-eminence of American power and leadership in the Atlantic had been accepted in Britain.

Policy involves power and, since 1918, the power relationship between the two countries has altered steadily and rapidly in favor of America. Though Britain appeared to retain her pre-eminence as a world power as recently as the eve of the second World War, successive British leaderships have understood since 1918 that America was the only power whose hostility they could not afford to risk. Since World War II they have understood that there could be no question of Britain engaging in a war against any large power except in alliance with the United States. In the rueful aftermath of the Suez campaign of 1956, some Britons concluded that, without American backing, they could not conduct even a tin pot military campaign for more than three days.

Much more than power is involved for both parties in this relationship. Unique ties of language, ideals, intellectual tradition and institutional similarity provide a cement that may be stronger still. Both peoples tend to view world problems through similar spectacles. Neither considers the other as being altogether foreign in the sense that both regard continental Europeans as "foreigners."

Through this century American Ambassadors to the Court of St. James have occupied a "place of special respect." While other foreign diplomats are relegated to the Court Circular, The American Ambassador is elevated to the political and social columns of the national press. This is only one aspect of a British diplomatic courtship of America which has been quite deliberate for several consecutive decades and has not gone unrequited.

On the American side, cultivation of the Special Relationship has been less compulsive and less consistent. Yet, on the whole, American foreign policy decisions have been made with more solicitude for British interests and views than for those of any other foreign power. Community of language and sentiment count for much in America too. There has been a long tradition of Anglophilia in high places here and, though WASP ascendancy in the American Establishment is no longer unchallenged, there

is still no likelihood that the *Alliance Française* will soon surpass the English Speaking Union in social prestige or political influence.

The Ambassadorship to the Court of St. James is still a coveted prize in America and is normally awarded to a rich donor to the campaign fund of the successful Presidential candidate. Recently it was bestowed on Mr. Walter Annenberg, a former Philadelphia newspaper publisher, whose high rank in the field of journalistic francophobia was only rivaled, not surpassed, by other American press magnates. Mindful of these marks of American esteem, the British invariably reciprocate by sending us their most attractive, eminent and skilled professional diplomatists. Whenever possible, England selects an Ambassador who has had intimate previous personal ties with the White House incumbent or his official family.

The heightened intimacy of British-American amity during the war did not automatically dissolve all English anxieties about America. Churchill, Eden and others have recorded their misgivings about American indifference to the political implications of their military decisions. Among these worries were President Roosevelt's seemingly excessive confidence in Stalin, his exaggerated conception of the role China could play in the post-war world, his incurable distrust and misunderstanding of de Gaulle, his apparent inability to conceive any postwar role for France commensurate with her prewar performance or future possibilities. For obvious reasons, Roosevelt's antipathy towards British (or even French) colonialism was scarcely comforting to the leaders of the British Empire. Despite these discomfitures, Churchill made it the cardinal rule of his policy to accommodate England's position to American decisions, when these could not be altered.

With only minor and brief exceptions, every postwar British leader from Atlee in 1945 to Wilson in 1969, adhered rigorously to this principle. For both Labor and Conservative Governments, there could be no question of British support for any continental power, including France, when the latter was in disagreement with Washington. This remarkable consistency in British foreign policy cannot be fully explained by British fear of Russia. There was also an understandable British ambition to remain at the summit of world power and there was a strategic grand design for the achievement of this aim.

Churchill and his successors, down to Macmillan, envisaged a policy of pivotal British influence upon three overlapping spheres or circles of power: the British Commonwealth and Empire, which Britain would continue to lead; the continent of Europe—or its Western part—over which England, with its legacy of wartime prestige would exercise a special influence (from a little distance); and the United States, whose policies—thanks to the Special Relationship—could be more influenced by Britain than by any other power.

The Churchillian vision of England commanding the nexus of three

vast overlapping circles of power exerted a profound influence over Atlee, Eden and Macmillan.* For both political parties, America represented the most important of the "Three Circles." It was on the Anglo-American alliance that British pride rested after the war, for this close association was the principal base of British ambition. English politicians, persuaded that the close wartime collaboration could be continued, were readily seduced by the prospect of special influence with America, special consideration from America. Churchill's postwar role in laying the foundation of America's containment policy (at Fulton, Mo.) and Foreign Minister Ernest Bevan's success in securing U.S. engagement in the Middle East (The Truman Doctrine) seemed to demonstrate the substantiality of this dream.

Britain's rapid manufacture of both the A and the H bombs further enhanced her conviction that she was the third greatest power in the world. In the postwar era the British position was unique in another respect: She was the only European state to emerge from the war both physically intact and politically stable. This uniqueness did nothing to detract from her self-image as the third superpower.

The "Three Circles" idea was in fact based on much more than a mere conceptual construction by politicians: it also represented a nice balancing of conflicting interests and differing mentalities among British groups. The Empire and Commonwealth connection had champions among thousands of families of administrators and graduates of public schools established to recruit self-assured young men to man the outposts of empire. Financial experts from the City had since the 1920's poured investments into South Africa, Australia, and America. Retired generals, distrustful of Europe, ignorant of its peoples and languages, proud of their great role in the recent war, also played an important part in British administration in the decades after the war. Younger men in the administration, unenthralled by the rule of war veterans, turned toward America, not Europe. The "angry young men" of the fifties were not pro-European idealists, like many of their counterparts across the channel. Moreover, draconian restrictions on British tourists' expenditures for decades after the war made it difficult for English youth to learn much about the continent.

Thus, by many strands of ambition and interest, affinity and antipathy, was England attached to the Three Circles concept, and especially to the American circle. When Churchill spoke in 1954 of the "majesty" of the unwritten Anglo-American alliance, there was fact as well as faith and hope in his words.

In the decade or so following our entry into the war, British-American relations had become so "enormously intricate and so deeply enmeshed that the business of conducting our relations . . . overflowed all the con-

* For the ensuing discussion of the "Three Circles" concept I am much indebted to the lucid article by Anthony Sampson, "La Grand-Bretagne S'Engage Vers L'Europe: 1, Les Trois Cercles," in *Le Monde*, 19 October, 1967.

ventional channels of diplomacy.” It scarcely seemed hyperbolic of Churchill to qualify this Special Relationship as “an alliance far closer in fact than many which exist in writing.” Despite the massive redistribution of world power that had occurred since 1940, and the striking reversal of the relative power and roles of Britain and America since then, most Englishmen had not yet perceived that though Britain had been among the victorious powers, only the two superpowers had “won” the war. Thus, until just past the mid-fifties, it was still possible to envisage the emergence of a kind of global *pax Angloamericana*.

Since this vision was based on the English side on the three pillar or “circle” Grand Design, it is a vision that has been almost completely erased from England’s perspectives by events since the late fifties. England’s prestigious European position had been squandered or eroded to the point of extinction by the mid-fifties. The dissolution of her Empire, begun in the 40’s, was virtually complete by 1960. By the end of the sixties, little remained of the Commonwealth.

The third circle—the orbit of special influence with America—has undergone many changes of fortune. Its compass had become greatly diminished by the mid-sixties. Britain’s long-delayed decision to join the European community (effective 1973) marks the end of a chapter, perhaps the end of an epoch, in the annals of pan-Angloamericanism.

But until the waning of the Cold War, the ambitions, ideas and illusions embodied in the “Three Circles” concept retained much of their force in England, and considerable backing in America. Two aspects of this special tie are of important and continuing significance: the nuclear partnership, and the relations of each to Europe.

TO this day, England and England *alone* is a regular recipient of highly classified nuclear information, material and weapons equipment from the United States. Among the present five nuclear powers, England and only England has agreed never (except in the supreme hypothesis) to use her nuclear weapons without the consent and collaboration of the United States. Neither country has ever had a foreign relationship more “special” than this nuclear partnership, whose persistence into the seventies flies in the face of numerous pronouncements of its demise.

Vice-President Nixon proclaimed its demise as early as 1956 when, in the midst of the Suez crisis, with Anglo-American relations in a shambles, he announced his satisfaction that America had at last declared its diplomatic independence of Great Britain. Because of the remarkable resurrection that occurred shortly after, a new death certificate had to be issued in the early sixties, this time by Dean Acheson. In his West Point speech, which produced loud reverberations in Britain, Acheson pointed out that England had found no new vocation to replace her vanished imperial mission. Since then, hardly a month has passed without some new

assertion, often from prestigious scholarly sources, that the Special Relationship was *in extremis* or already dead. The actual continuation of the Anglo-American nuclear accords would suggest that earlier reports of the Partnership's demise were a bit exaggerated.

But the course of this collaboration has never been consistent nor free from road blocks. The nuclear special relationship originated in the wartime collaboration of the two powers in the construction of the first atomic bomb. After a postwar interruption, it was restored on a new basis as a result of Britain's hard work and hard-nosed bargaining.

Work on the bomb was begun in England. Following a decision made at the summit in Hyde Park, New York, by Roosevelt and Churchill in 1942, the construction was concluded in America, as a joint undertaking. The intimacy and informality of wartime relations between the two allies is attested by the fact that no written record exists of the momentous decision. This very informality entailed various disadvantages for England. The collaborative work of the so-called Manhattan Project was placed under the administration of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, who straightway imposed upon it a new doctrine: all work was to be compartmentalized and no unnecessary information exchanged between compartments. This meant in effect that while English and other foreign scientists on the British team contributed without reservation to American know-how, there would be serious reservations on America's sharing of the total result.

Churchill's subsequent protests to Roosevelt about this arrangement were amicably received and went cordially unheeded, until Britain threatened to resume her nuclear work independently. The result was the Quebec Agreement of 1943, later amended by a 1944 *Aide-Memoire*.

These wartime agreements were the first and most important international nuclear commitments ever made. Though abrogated unilaterally by America after the war and later replaced by more restricted accords, the Anglo-American agreements of 1943 and 1944 would influence world politics beyond the war and perhaps to the present time.

The atomic agreements guaranteed to America "free exchange" of all British atomic information, and to Britain all information "which could serve the war effort," which was less than England desired. More significantly, they embodied a mutual engagement never to use the A-bomb against each other and gave each a right of veto against the other's use of the bomb against a third party, or the communication of atomic secrets to another power. This latter restriction has never been permitted to lapse in practice—as least so far as it limits Britain's freedom of action.

Another provision established a virtual Anglo-American monopoly over the Western world's supply of uranium in the fifties, and endured until rendered useless by a world abundance of the material in 1961.

These understandings marked the apogee of the Anglo-American nuclear (and political) partnership: already pledged to make no separate

peace or truce in the war raging, England and America had undertaken to give each other a veto on the making of nuclear war on any other power, and on the communication to any other power of the information that could give it the means of making nuclear war.

Since then, much has changed in the Anglo-American nuclear partnership; but Britain still enjoys a specially privileged nuclear relationship with the U.S. and the general policy tendencies evident in the wartime agreement continued to influence the behavior of the two powers for at least 25 years after the war.

Yet the path of partnership was not smooth. Wartime secrecy, imprecision of terms, and the abrupt departure of both Churchill and Roosevelt from leadership in 1945, contributed to confusion and conflict on the nuclear issue. So secret were the agreements of 1943 and 1944 that only Roosevelt and Churchill knew of their existence. The only American copy of the 1944 *Aide-Memoire* was lost in an irrelevant file for many years. Dean Acheson became privy to it in 1945, before other influential members of our Government. Not even Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson knew of its existence. Churchill's deputy, Clement Attlee, learned of it only after becoming Prime Minister in 1945. This excess of wartime secrecy made it easier for President Truman to suspend the operation of the agreement. In any case, no nuclear cooperation was forthcoming from the U.S. for three years after the war.

If American officials such as Dean Acheson considered that America had failed to perform its obligations under the Agreements, it is easy to understand the dismay of Britain's leaders when Truman rebuffed their requests for information in 1946 and threw his support behind the McMahon Act (1947), which attempted to establish an American monopoly of atomic information. Despite sharp exchanges between Truman and Attlee, the American rebuff stood. Truman's position had strong domestic support from a strange assortment of backers: American "nationalists" and American "internationalists." The former crusaded for a perpetual American nuclear monopoly; the latter advocated that only the U.N. should control these weapons—a goal that would be jeopardized, they argued, by advance sharing with England. A triumph for either ideology could not have made any difference, prior to America's Cold War commitments, on the practicalities of U.S. policy.

Having failed to reap the postwar benefits of their wartime nuclear partnership, the British Government launched its own atomic energy program, while continuing to press America diplomatically for resumption of Anglo-American collaboration. Thanks to hard work in duplicating much of the earlier joint nuclear accomplishment, and hard diplomatic bargaining, a narrowly limited nuclear cooperation was resumed under terms of a *Modus Vivendi* concluded January 8, 1948—about a year after Britain had relinquished and America assumed a commitment to defend Greece,

and five months before the beginning of the Berlin blockade. The American move toward anti-Soviet alliance and the evident failure of the Baruch-Acheson Plan for U.N. control of atomic weapons, doubtless played a large part in the American change of attitude. Nevertheless, Britain had to pay a substantial *quid pro quo* for the new agreement: she was obliged to accept abrogation of the political clauses of the Quebec agreement—and acceptance of this arrangement was made a precondition to final Congressional action on the Marshall Plan. Another condition was transfer to America of a large stockpile of uranium, and a large share of the rich Congolese resources Britain had acquired by agreement with Belgium. According to Acheson, the President and State Department were inclined to adopt a less ungenerous nuclear policy towards England, but were prevented from doing so by Congressional "isolationists," notably Senators Vandenberg, Millikan, Hickenlooper and Knowland. The narrow restrictions of this agreement left rankled feelings in England, since even our own executive leaders felt that Britain had been scamped of what was due her.

Britain's position was not immediately improved even by Churchill's return to power in 1951. The explosion of a Russian A-bomb in 1949 blasted away some of the Senate's obsessions about preserving (from the British) "our priceless secret heritage." But while the Senate was considering a change of policy, another bombshell burst in London in February 1950: the Klaus Fuchs affair, which revealed high level pro-Soviet espionage in the British nuclear establishment. This *cause célèbre* put a stop to further talks about fuller, longer term Anglo-American nuclear cooperation, until the end of the Truman administration.

It was not until after General Dwight D. Eisenhower had become President, and the British had exploded their own A-bomb that, by the curious logic of American policy, the McMahon Act was modified in 1954 to permit fuller exchanges of information with the United Kingdom.

The door to cooperation was now open, though not yet as wide as the British had hoped. Secrets of weapons design were still excluded from the exchanges. The fact that the two countries were now the leading members of America's first peacetime military alliance only served to harden the American concept of a "division of labor" among the allies—a division under which America would retain control of the Alliance's nuclear thunder and lightning, while Europe would provide the battlefields and the footsoldiers. Senator Vandenberg's conversion to "internationalism" had carried neither him nor the Senate to the point where another country could be considered a fully equal partner.

Yet, Britain had achieved a specially privileged nuclear relationship by 1948 and this was greatly enhanced by the enlarged cooperation successfully urged on Congress by Eisenhower in 1954. The door to an even more extensive Anglo-American nuclear cooperation was opened following Russia's launching of Sputnik and the explosion of the first British H-bomb

(1957). The following year Congress enacted a law specially tailored to accommodate British desires for fuller exchanges, and even British sources concede that both sides were "genuinely liberal" in interpreting the new agreements. Thus, by the end of the fifties, the prevalent view in Washington was that America was committed to help Britain maintain her own nuclear deterrent.

Though some American policy makers dissented from the view, believing it unwise for America to support England's nuclear position, the consensus considered it natural for America to undertake production of the Skybolt nuclear missile delivery system for Britain in the early sixties. When, for reasons of internal economy, our government abruptly cancelled production of this item, without consulting Britain, it seemed right that we should provide a substitute. For this reason, President Kennedy, who had earlier consented to the demolition of his allies' nuclear deterrence program, agreed at the Nassau conference to provide Polaris missiles to Britain, thus prolonging the life of the British deterrent force. The Nassau agreement had the additional effect of preserving the Macmillan Government from a domestic crisis it might not otherwise have survived.

Though Anglo-American nuclear cooperation had expanded substantially by virtue of the Agreements of 1958 and 1962, there was a certain ambivalence in the American position, for the thrust of our policy had been to reduce the possibility that British weapons could be independently used. Moreover, each advance in British-American cooperation imposed new limitations on England's freedom to cooperate in nuclear matters with a third power. In practice, this eliminated the possibility of an Anglo-French cooperation and made nugatory the prospects of the "European" nuclear deterrent we officially approved, as against the "national" (i.e., French) deterrent we officially deplored.

There was also a certain disingenuousness in the American concept of a "common" policy and strategy among the North Atlantic allies. This was made clear by General de Gaulle who, soon after his return to power in 1958, proposed transformation of the Anglo-American nuclear liaison into a *menage à trois*, by the establishment of a three power "directorate" of global nuclear strategy. His proposition was politely but firmly brushed off in both Washington and London.

When President Kennedy, almost as an afterthought, offered Polaris missiles to France, de Gaulle dramatically rejected the offer—and incidentally terminated current British negotiations for entry into the European Common Market. France, who had not been consulted in advance of the offer, had been working for the previous nine years—without assistance from anyone—on its own nuclear deterrent. Only a few weeks before the fateful Nassau conference, the subject of possible Anglo-French nuclear collaboration had been broached to Macmillan by de Gaulle, and the matter had been left as an open question. Moreover, France at that time had

no nuclear submarine and therefore could not have deployed the professed missile. In any case, French policy aimed at less, not more dependence on America and, from this perspective the belated American offer of assistance (*cum* subordination) did not appear as a boon to France. By contrast, British policy now seemed firmly oriented, or resigned, to increasing dependence on America.

Yet, there remained one aspect of British nuclear policy that has been neglected by almost all academic analysts of America's alliance policy: the "silent premise" of British nuclear policy. The suppressed or silent premise of British policy posits that "a divergence of strategic interest" could develop between Britain and America. However important the premise, only once in the postwar period did a British statesman articulate this idea in public. Defense Minister Duncan Sandys justified the British decision to build the H-bomb in 1956 on the following grounds: England could safely depend on America for defense only for so long as America kept large forces in Europe and based her bombers in England: "But, when they have developed the 5,000 miles intercontinental ballistic missile, can we really be sure that every American Administration will go on looking at things in quite the same way."

General de Gaulle saw even further ahead than the English, recognizing that when *both* Russia and America had the ICBM, *neither* could thereafter risk an attack on the other. But any nuclear power might then be able to attack a non-nuclear Europe whose deterrence rested solely on a Washington decision to accept its own nuclear annihilation. By the twinkling light of Sputnik (1957) de Gaulle, whose perception was also quicker than his British friends', discerned that the inevitable had already happened.

The candidly articulated Gaullist position provoked storms of hostile criticism in the United States. Britain's silence on this premise, plus the emollient of a well cultivated and long-standing "special relationship" which France could not have duplicated, helped preserve Great Britain from the gales of transatlantic criticism that blew in upon France.

Britain's ready adherence in the mid-sixties to the American-sponsored nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which aimed to freeze the nuclear *status quo*, posed an additional barrier to possible Anglo-French cooperation in atomic military technology. It was, therefore, another obstacle on Britain's road to Europe.

Until the end of the sixties, few British statesmen (other than Edward Heath) seemed to understand how high a price they were paying for the comfortable cordiality of the "Special Relationship." The terms of their privileged nuclear partnership with America in effect prevented Britain from taking the step her wiser statesmen considered essential for her longer-term survival as a political force in the world: entry into the European community.

THE impact of the Special Relationship upon the policy of both powers toward the continent may have been its most significant consequence in the quarter century following the war. Britain's attachment to the transatlantic tie was a potent factor in maintaining the separation of England from the Common Market, and from the European movement towards closer political association. The influence of this relationship on American diplomacy conduced to a somewhat distorted view of the European problem and helped lead us into policy positions that tended to reduce British prospects for membership in the European Community. Though no one state could speak for all of Europe, French policy, particularly after the return of General de Gaulle in 1958, was probably the best single indicator of the longer range interests and shared attitudes that would emerge among the Western European states with regard to a wide range of issues. Nothing more starkly revealed the distortions in American and British perceptions of Europe than their behavior towards France. Though Gaullist France projected a striking prefiguration of what a "European" foreign policy would be, both England and America seemed to regard the General's policies as a passing aberration.

British attitudes towards the postwar European movement, though at first ambiguous, had become quite clear by the early fifties, when Churchill reaffirmed that England did not "intend to be merged in a . . . European system." Though full (verbal!) support and approval was given to European unificatory movements of the period, neither Labor nor Conservative Governments would accept participation. Both assumed that British cooperation with the continent would be confined largely to the framework of an Anglo-American dominated North Atlantic system, in which Britain could exercise special, perhaps pivotal, influence.

American officialdom was ambivalent during the fifties on the question of England's relations with the continent. They sometimes indicated a desire to see closer British collaboration with Europe but, on the whole, seemed more interested in securing certain short-term benefits from the Special Relationship and did not seriously prod Great Britain in the direction of Europe. In any case, Britain's policy of apartness from European economic and political unification movements did not strain its relations with America, nor elicit open criticism of the kind later directed against de Gaulle.

The durability of the special tie was dramatically revealed in the sequel to the Suez episode of 1956. This crisis, the low watermark of British-American relations in the 20th century, was triggered by the rash diplomacy of American Secretary of State John Foster Dulles; its heavy costs were borne mainly by Great Britain. Following abrupt cancellation of a proffered Anglo-American loan for construction of Egypt's Aswan dam, President Gamal Nasser retaliated by seizing the British controlled Suez Canal. While Britain contemplated military action, Dulles' opaque diplo-

matic delaying action succeeded in misleading the British about America's intentions and confusing the issue in which the Eden cabinet considered England (and the West) had a vital interest. A secretly concerted British-French-Israeli attack on Egypt brought instantaneous, determined, and even ferocious American denunciation of the Franco-British action. Every engine of pressure at America's disposal was applied to compel England and France to withdraw under humiliating conditions.

However spectacular the breakdown of Anglo-American relations during the Suez crisis, its aftermath was of still greater significance for this examination of the Special Relationship. France and England drew radically different diplomatic conclusions from their common experience. The French, beset by other problems but unburdened by a "special relationship," moved rapidly towards closer continental cooperation, accelerated independent nuclear weapons research and decreased diplomatic dependence on America. The British concluded that they were henceforward incapable of taking serious international action without the active support of the United States. A few thoughtful Britons questioned this conclusion. It was argued (by Hugh Thomas) that the Suez debacle did not prove Britain to be basically impotent; it demonstrated only that England could not act on her own while maintaining a specially privileged reserve currency and an excessive dependency on America for oil and nuclear protection. Whatever the force of this argument, British policy-makers remained impervious to it for many years to come.

In the Gaullist decade that began soon after Suez, the contrast between decreasing French and increasing British dependency on America became as sharp as the "edge of the sword."

The dilemmas facing British and American policy toward Europe did not come into clear focus until after the Treaty of Rome in 1958, when it soon appeared that the developing partnership of the six West European states was destined for impressive economic success and—perhaps—real progress towards political unification as well.

European federation, or union of some sort, had been a professed goal of American policy since the early days of the Marshall plan. Later it was to become almost an official obsession when, in the early sixties, American spokesmen began to speak of it as if it had always been the central goal of American diplomacy—and one that was now within arm's reach. To this end President Kennedy, almost from the beginning of his term and with increasing openness, urged England to enter the European community.

British leaders had other views. When Harold Macmillan came to power in 1957, his reputed European affinities did not prevail over his attachment to the Anglo-American alliance. From birth, sympathy and close connections Macmillan believed that the peace and prosperity of the world depended upon close cooperation between Britain and the United

States. For half a century in all the main issues dominating his thoughts and those of his colleague (he wrote in 1966), "our relations with the United States . . . formed a thread running through all the others." Fixed upon this special connection as the polar star of his policy, Macmillan "moved quickly to mend ruptured relations with America," and later declared with satisfaction that after Dulles' departure Anglo-American relations became "so good that our influence . . . could be exerted to the full." Thus, Macmillan seemed able to persuade himself—for a time, at least—that Britain could supply the brain, America the brawn, in an Anglo-American world policy.

In view of the fact that the new British Prime Minister had promptly taken up the Churchillian Three Circles idea, it seemed natural for Britain to decline proffered membership in the Common Market. When her continental neighbors made bold to go ahead without her, the British response was to form a rival group, the European Free Trade Area (EFTA), a looser grouping of seven states on the periphery of the EEC. To many it appeared that Britain, having missed the bus on the Treaty of Rome, was now trying to puncture its tires.

American policy, after a brief period of equal support to both EEC and EFTA, soon veered towards solid support of the continental community, to which England was urged to adhere. President Kennedy's policy envisaged a narrowing, not an end of America's special ties with England. Even before the dramatic pronouncement of Kennedy's "Grand Design" (4 July, 1962) it was precisely in terms of the common political interests of America and Britain that the latter's entry into Europe was discussed between the President and the Prime Minister. Britain was conceived as the stabilizing influence after the passing of Adenauer and de Gaulle. The British position on disarmament, aid to developing countries, East-West relations would be, it was supposed, closer to American policy than that of France or Germany. According to the Kennedy reasoning, not only could England offset the "eccentricities" of policy in Paris and Bonn; London would, moreover, prevent the EEC "from becoming a high-tariff, "inward-looking, white man's club." Above all, the Market could become the "basis for a true political federation of Europe."

Many forces besides Kennedy's diplomacy concerted during the seven years of Macmillan's premiership to demonstrate the untenability of Britain's Three Circles policy. South Africa left the Commonwealth in 1961; Australia, New Zealand and Canada had long since fallen into the strategic orbit of America.

The British decision in 1961 to seek membership in the Market was neither easy nor unambiguous. The failure of the 1960 Summit conference ended the British dream of presiding over an East-West *détente*. The European Free Trade Association had been a disappointment: it had neither put a spoke in the Communities' wheel, nor hastened the merger of

the two zones in a diluted trading system. There seemed no other avenue to the kind of European system England wanted: one that would give her a cut in the continental trade cake, while preserving special relations with Commonwealths and America. British industry needed a boost and Britain's foreign trade had not yet been balanced. With mixed feelings Macmillan's government concluded that Common Market entry would provide the boost and the balance, though Laborites remained (until 1964) stridently opposed, and some Tories spoke gloomily of the end of a thousand years of British history.

There was considerably less than met the eye in Britain's decision in 1961 to seek membership in the European community. There were deep domestic divisions on this issue and the protracted negotiations that ensued (1961-62) were undertaken without any real attempt to ascertain—or inform the British public—what the cost of entry would be. Macmillan's assumption that England could be quietly eased into the Market before the interested publics seriously considered the consequences, seems singularly inept—and unseemly in a statesman of a democratic nation.

The issues had been discussed amiably between de Gaulle and Macmillan on many occasions prior to and during the negotiations. No resolutions had been reached, even in principle, to the massive obstacles posed by Britain's special economic, monetary and strategic arrangements with the Commonwealth and America. Despite unresolved obstacles, de Gaulle was convinced of Macmillan's sincerity in desiring to join Europe. This fact, plus the launching of Kennedy's "Grand Design" in 1962, seemed to presage a narrowing of the Anglo-American "special relationship" in favor of more equal relations between the United States and a Europe to which England would adhere. Yet, after 18 months of largely fruitless English negotiations at Brussels, and only 6 months after Kennedy announced his "Grand Design," came the Nassau Agreement of December 1962, extending and enlarging American nuclear aid to England—and British subordination to American policy.

The failure of England's first attempt to enter Europe is easily explicable in terms of her unreadiness to accept basic conditions required of all members. Given the circumstances, Britain's failure was—contrary to the euphoric propaganda of the period—a foregone conclusion. Britain had never really offered to join the Market "*as is*." Britain and America were nonetheless stupefied by de Gaulle's veto of further, pointless, negotiations. From this resulted a rich journalistic folklore in which it was easy to identify the French villain who had frustrated British initiative.

The folklore neglected, by and large, to note the main efforts of Britain's first application and the protracted negotiations that followed. One effect was to paralyze the Community's decision-making process for 18 months. Pending the outcome of British negotiations at Brussels, no new policy departures could be made by the Six members. This was not the

only damage resulting from England's ill-conceived, badly timed but stubbornly pursued Brussels negotiations. An indirect result was the shelving for an indefinite time of General de Gaulle's project for the formation of a European political organization (The Fouchet Plan), which could have been the first step toward the making of a European confederation.

By the mid-sixties, the Macmillan regime had been replaced by a Labour Government headed by Harold Wilson. The latter, a belated convert to "Europe," launched a new campaign for admission to the Market that failed for similar, almost identical, reasons. British tactics, far from brilliant in the early sixties, achieved a new dimension of ineptitude under Wilson, who seemed to fancy he could storm his way into the Market, if necessary, by securing the removal of France and her replacement by England. In this connection, the odious "Soames Affair" of 1969—publication, by British *Cabinet* decision, of a distorted and misleading version of a confidential proposal by de Gaulle to British Ambassador Christopher Soames—must have been the nadir of British diplomacy.

Until the end of the decade, American and British hopes for an enlarged European community were unrealized and the attitudes of both countries continued to be nourished by illusions. The British (encouraged by Americans) imagined they could digest both Washington-sponsored Atlanticism and continental Europeanism. One of the American illusions was the Establishment orthodoxy that Britain's eventual admission to Europe would make the difference between European "liberalism" vs "protectionism" and "outwardness" vs "inwardness." The hard facts of postwar tariff arithmetic never supported this notion: Common Market external tariffs have for years been substantially lower than those of Great Britain, which were in turn higher than those of the United States, and American tariffs are not lower than those of the continental Six.

Talk about continental political "inwardness" vs British "outwardness" was equally confusing to analysts who looked beyond labels and tried to assess realities. Historically, for English leaders "outwardness" meant maintenance of Britain's Commonwealth leadership and special influence with America; it signified aloofness from continental ties and priority for the American alignment over Europe in all cases of conflicting views. In the British political lexicon, the development of any third force in Europe would be defined (and deplored) as "inward looking." During the War, "outwardness" meant the exclusion of de Gaulle from the inner councils of the alliance; in the 1960's, the Gaullist "inwardness" America deplored was scarcely distinguishable from the European independence we claimed to desire.

Largely because of the shared illusions bound up with their Special Relations, neither English nor American leaders understood, until the end of the sixties, that the essential meaning of the European movement was desire to escape from the American—or "Anglo-Saxon"—hegemony.

French political, military and economic policies can only be understood as attempts to regain for Europe an independent initiative in determining the conditions of her existence. In particular, the Ostpolitik initiated by de Gaulle and later carried forward by Brandt embody a sober and sincere attempt by Europeans to make a real European peace—a project that American “leadership” had first bungled, then all but shelved in favor of militarized Atlantic “security.”

In so far as these diplomatic démarches have succeeded, their success owed nothing to Britain and less to America; insofar as they have been only partially successful, or failed, England must bear a heavy responsibility.

There is a considerable measure of justice in Robert Skidelsky’s harsh judgment that, “in pursuit of the will-o’-the wisp of Anglo-American partnership, the British have succeeded in castrating themselves intellectually, politically and morally.” By the end of the sixties it was “difficult to see what the British could contribute to the relationship, except a rigid adherence to cold-war doctrines,” or what they could reap from it, except increased subservience.

During the quarter century now ending, America was willing to pay a price for British support of its global policies and lip service to its foreign policy doctrines. The Wilson cabinet carried this tendency to its ultimate absurdity: support of President Johnson’s Indo-Chinese policy. Wilson’s successor, Edward Heath—an intelligent and dedicated “European”—has so far seemed to possess the requisite strength, imagination and resolve to take England into a European union. This notion, so profoundly alien to British history of the past, may provide England today the only opening through which she can pass intact into the history of the future.

On the American side, official analysts are just beginning to perceive that England’s entry into the European Community will not necessarily produce the antidote to “inwardness,” the “liberalization” of policy or the buffer against “protectionist” tendencies that were supposed to result from this event. It is more likely that England’s admission will tend towards the opposite effect. There is, moreover, not the slightest prospect of achieving the goal America officially professed in urging British entry into the Market: namely, to expedite the conversion of Western Europe into a political Federation. To unillusioned observers it was always evident that England’s entrance would prevent the formation of a Federation—even in the most improbable event the original Six were willing to take this step. It is much more likely that the expected participation of England (and others) in the European community after 1973 will retard future movements towards even a looser, confederal, political union.

Nothing has yet precluded the possibility that President Nixon will accomplish a sober, sensible revision of American policy. It is unlikely, however, that this will be evidenced until after the end of the Indo-Chinese

war. Meanwhile, the "Nixon Doctrine" remains enigmatic as regards its application to Europe, though it may be symptomatic that a great bargain on the international monetary system was recently struck between Nixon and Pompidou at the Azores conference of December, 1971. Excluded from Yalta, Cairo, Tehran and other Anglo-American conferences that organized the post-war world, France, in the person of Gaullist President Pompidou, "faced the American President alone as, in effect, the spokesman for the rest of the industrialized world."

In view of the floods of strabismic, anti-French "analysis" our academic experts have poured over the country for the past several years, it may be a decade before dispassionate historians record that the European Community, BBE (Before British entry) had been neither "protectionist" nor particularly "inward-looking:" and that its principal leader, France, had been especially free from these vices. The future historian may also discover that American fears about Europe in the 1960's had been misplaced. They may record that the real "threat" from Europe was not the relapse into economic protectionism our officials professed to fear, but a resurgence of *competition*; not a retreat into "inwardness," but a reassertion of European *initiatives* in the realm of international policies; and not an unwanted perpetuation of America's "burdens of world leadership," but a dismaying diminution of them.

It could come to pass, too, that these same hypothetical historians will record that the attenuation of the historic Anglo-American special relationship marked the end of American participation in Europe-spawned world wars. It was no longer necessary for American military forces to intervene to preserve an imperiled Great Britain and restore a deranged continental balance of power. This, not only because American, European and Soviet nuclear power had made military belligerency among them unthinkable; but also for the simple reason that a durable concert of Britain, France and Germany (and who knows how many others) had precluded formation of a European hegemony that would be hostile to any vital American interest.

In the future era of U.S. relations with kindred European nations, it is at least conceivable that America might revivify the wisdom of her first President's final admonition: avoid "passionate attachment" to one foreign nation, for it leads to concession of "special privileges denied to others;" and shun "inveterate antipathies against particular nations," for they cause each "to be haughty and intractable, when accidental or trifling occasions of dispute occur."



Poems by Cecilia Meireles

Sad

Sad
are these hands building dunes
in the sand.

Lonely dream,
useless structures;
a breeze gently blows
dissolving spume
demolishing domes
in this realm of dunes
and beloved faces
in its columns.

Sad
are these hands obscurely working
in the sand.

To the source they return
in dreams they bathe
high winds
and gentle foam.
These delicate sand-grains
—flintstone and spark—
burn the eyes!
And the cruel tears
never dry
nor the strong winds
nor the tender foam . . .

Sad
are these hands building dunes
in the sand.

Those who live beyond
the elegant parkways;
know nothing of roads
long and gloomy
that uncertainly lead
down to the sea.
They know nothing of winds
nothing of foam
or curved domes
or weak columns,
or of hands deeply buried
in these sculptures.

Solitude

Endless nights of winter
with mountains silent and cold
and the black sea more timeless
more frightening and deep.

These roaring waters
are shapeless as grief
climbing boulders, falling down crags
leaving the world to return.

Mist scatters planets,
wind twists the sands;
no traces remain on the ground,
no stars in the silence.

Night seals its lips
—land and sky—shield a name.
Long wise dreams
create the lives of men.

Uncertain eyes follow
rivers that flow
through open fields
toward the clear light of day.

Translated from the Portuguese by D. M. Pettinella

At the Prom

● Michael Paul Novak

The music, the flickering lights,
The gowns challenging rainbows,
The girls unrecognizable orchids
Moving with the eagerness of wind—
It seemed so natural
To take Julie in my arms
Holding her close enough
To waltz away a decade
For a few slow steps,
Until trying something tricky
I went awkward and grey.

A student told me later how pleased
They were to see us dance—
I was so . . . serious in class.
They're always teaching me. To dance
Defeats the serious and smug,
Proves something intimate and human.

I didn't tell her I'd been drinking.

Explanation, of Sorts, for Pessimism

● Michael Paul Novak

“Why always the dark side of the moon,
The wall, the night?” she wrote to me,
She who has felt the tragic. “Pain, death
Have barely touched you.” And when I read
My poems my students look betrayed.

So I try, try for her sake and theirs,
Scribble lines about children, peace,
And flashes of wonder that I know
Exist. But when the poem stalks in
The dead hold me, demand my truth.

I Have This Uneasy Feeling

• Ralph Hayes

The room is crowded with shouting people and I have this mild nausea in the pit of my stomach where the black olives and boiled shrimp rest heavily. Martinis have been spilled down the front of deep-cut gowns and cigarette ashes hang inch-long between yellowed fingers and mascara is smudging under dark-rimmed eyes and everything is very ordinary. But there is this nausea.

Marti has been cornered by this tall Vince Lombardi-type with gray at the temples and a good tan. Marti holds her eight-month watermelon belly with one hand and an empty cocktail glass with the other. Lombardi is shouting red-faced at her.

"And you know where the ball *landed*? You know, hah? Right behind this enormous oak in a foot of rough. Well, I take this special heavy-weight sand wedge, see, and I study the situation. You understand? This club has this fifty-eight degree left angle. Right? So I take a normal five-iron stance, with my hands just *slightly* ahead at the address. You follow me?"

He shouts red-eyed at her and Marti stands as if in a gale, clutching her belly, glancing at me with a hard strained grin. I grin back and watch the blue veins stand out in Lombardi's neck as he shouts. There is such an urgency in his manner, in the manner of all of them in the room, that it is unnerving.

Between me and the bar, close at hand, a man and woman stand yelling at each other. They do not know each other's names. He is burly and thick-necked and she is a small stringy cattle egret pecking furiously into the teeth of a brown bear.

"If we don't come to our senses soon," she pecks at him, also punching a sinewy finger into his barrel chest, "it will be too late. Maybe you didn't know that Richard Nixon is a Communist?"

"The blacks got the same rights as everybody else," the bear roars back at her. "I'm sick and tired about all this ranting and raving over it. You think I'm going to invite a man into my home—my *home*—after he's just burned my neighbor's store building down? Like hell, I am!"

"It all started at Yalta," the egret shrills. "When Roosevelt showed *his* true colors by giving Europe to them. Oh, God, how we need another Joe McCarthy! You don't know who they are, now. Why, I could mention some names that would shock you. Yes, *shock* you!"

It is like listening to a couple in adjoining telephone booths, hearing only one end of two unrelated conversations. I try not to listen. I move to the bar to get Marti a drink, and two long-haired young men are discussing seriously. I relax a little. Here will be intellectual curiosity. Here will be sanity.

"Did you know they've made this study of pollution in the river?" the tall gaunt one is saying, enunciating his syllables carefully. "Brightly colored buoys were dropped into the water at a source of maximum effluent disposal, and then the buoys were followed to see where they went. Would you believe New London, Connecticut, for God's sake? On a swimming beach? I mean, what do we do, man, halogenate the ocean? Build under-water purification plants? Turn sea water into NaOCl or Ca(OC1)2?"

The other young man is studying the speaker's face intently, before answering. A wave of calm passes over me, and I start to turn from them.

"The black rhinocerous female," the second fellow begins cryptically, "requires fourteen months for gestation, and bears offspring only once every two and a half years. This very infrequency of mating limits the chance of survival of the species in the ecosystem."

I feel the boiled shrimps again. I turn deliberately away from them and order two drinks. While I am getting them, a large husky woman corners me. She makes a gutteral greeting without meeting my eyes. I notice a large, masculine watch on her hairy wrist. "What time has it gotten to be?" I ask.

The woman stares at the ceiling as if she has spotted a bug there and is trying to identify it. "We are tired of being *used* by men," she says, studying the ceiling. "We are revolted by being identified as sex symbols and mating partners. Why must it be the woman who rears the child? The woman should mate when *she* feels like it and the offspring be raised in clinics. And she has the fundamental *right* of orgasm. That must be a basic demand."

I stand there embarrassed, a drink in each hand. I offer her a drink and she does not hear me. "Perhaps you've met my wife," I say to her. "She spoke with a lib leader just last week."

The big woman is staring at a blemish on the bridge of my nose now, contemptuously. She does not look into my eyes, but speaks to the contemptible blemish. "Can you imagine what it must have been like for St. Joan just before they lighted that fire under her?" she says. "Do you have any idea?"

"Well, I would imagine—"

"Of course not. Let me tell you, this *woman* was the spirit incarnate of the liberated female. She had the *guts* to stand up and say, 'I am a woman!'"

I stand there trying to catch her attention. "My wife is the direct descendant of Carrie Nation," I say, "and has planted a bomb under this

den of iniquity, to go off in thirty seconds."

"Ridiculous!"

I smile.

"The whole movement is ridiculous without militant leadership," she says, shouting past me. The smile slides off my face. "But we will always have the shining example of St. Joan. And let us not forget Florence Nightingale."

"Well, I must abandon the premises before the explosion rips the building asunder," I tell her. She does not seem to see me leave. She continues her pronouncements to the bartender.

I find Marti.

"Drink this and let's get out of here," I tell her. The big brown golfer has left her to shout at somebody else and she is sagging against a wall.

"Good God," she says, downing the drink in one gulp.

We drive home. Before we left for the party, I had seen a letter from a credit bureau in with the rest, but thought it was junk mail and had not opened it. While Marti is lying in bed watching the late news, I open the letter. It is from the Apex Credit Bureau, an out of town company, and it is a second demand for payment. It says we owe the Barnholt Department Store in Hartford, Connecticut the sum of \$1274.19.

REMIT PAYMENT WITHIN SEVEN DAYS, it says.

"Good Lord!" Marti says, when I show it to her.

We had lived in Hartford for a short time the previous year, and knew of Barnholt's, but had never purchased anything there, nor opened an account there.

I sit down heavily and stare at the TV, simultaneous spasms of anger and fear thrusting themselves up through my chest. \$1274.19 is a lot of money. Surely I was entitled to some kind of personal contact by Barnholt before they assigned the claim. Even if I had been the right creditor. On TV, the President is commenting on a demonstration by starving people on the steps of the White House.

"You people must return to your homes," the President is saying. "Demonstrations will not put food in your stomachs. I am aware, I assure you, of your problems. I am informed of rising unemployment. But you must remember that these conditions are normal to a healthy economy. Let me make it perfectly clear, I am just as much against starvation as any of you out there."

I punch the TV off with a nervous stab of my finger. "This is nothing to get excited about," I say to Marti. "I will write to them and explain that this is a silly mistake. There is no reason to be upset." *I am aware, I assure you, of your problems. I assure you, I am aware, I assure you.*

Marti looks at me doubtfully.

The next day I write this nice letter to Apex, this reasonable, friendly letter, and I explain the situation. I suggest that they have written to the

wrong Frank Giroux and that a re-check of their records will undoubtedly reveal this simple error. I send the letter off with many self-assurances.

Marti goes to the doctor a few days later and he mentions that it is just a couple of weeks until the big event. She has experienced no flow of amniotic fluid, nor retraction of the lower uterine segment, but he is getting close. The baby is ready and in place and I try to forget the Apex Credit Bureau.

Marti is very large now and eats a lot of lime pie. She is having a cookbook published by a small publisher in Chicago and the book makes her think of eating. A while ago she wrote a letter to the publisher, asking a half dozen questions about that book and another one she is planning and in which they have expressed an interest. In the letter Marti asked about publication date, royalty arrangements, and contract language. She also suggested several ideas about the next book. When she receives a reply, it is from a different person in the editorial department and it consists of five lines.

"Your letter of July 24 is in hand. We have placed it in our file here. Your book is being blocked out for printing and will be published in due course. Meanwhile, we wish to express our gratitude for your cooperation herein, and, of course, invite further submissions at any time."

"I don't think I understand," Marti says, sitting there reading the letter and holding her belly. "They admit getting my letter. My two-page letter. But they made absolutely no effort to answer anything in it."

"Probably some clerk typed it in the editor's absence," I suggest to her.

"I can't believe my letter was read," Marti says.

"Try again, Marti. It will be all right, you'll get through to somebody." But I find I have this uneasy feeling again.

Marti writes another letter. But before any reply comes, we receive another correspondence in the mail from Apex Credit Bureau. "This will be their letter of apology," I explain to Marti. It is a third demand for payment.

It is also a final notice, warning that if payment is not forthcoming by return mail, the credit company will be obliged to take "other action" to collect the claim.

Now it is Marti's turn to be hopeful. "Maybe they didn't understand your letter," she says. "Maybe they didn't even get it."

"Something tells me they got it," I say.

"It's probably all done by machine. Pam's Ed kept getting these premium notices from an insurance company he had never heard of. He sent notes back, saying he was not insured by them, but the form letters kept coming to him, on a kind of card, insisting on payment. The notes got nastier and nastier. Ed finally figured that the notes were coming from a computer instead of a real person. So he went down to his place at night

and programmed his own computer with the proper input data. It has to do with code patterns and binary digits. He used a Two-Out-Of-Five Fixed Count Code, utilizing five binary bit positions."

"What the hell are you talking about?" I ask her, looking up from the third notice.

"The code. It had to be coded so the insurance company's computer could accept the message on its own punched-card reader," Marti goes on. "Anyway, Ed sent the message to the *machine* this time, and guess what?"

I look up at her numbly.

"He gets the nicest note back from the insurance company's computer. The computer understood completely and was sorry for the error, which it classified as human."

"That is an obscene story," I say.

"But true."

"Marti, this is a lot of money we're talking about here. We can't just pass it off as a bad joke, or call on Ed's computer."

"Give it a little time," Marti tells me. "I'm sure you'll get a letter. Anyway, you don't expect me to worry about that until this baby thing is over, now do you?"

"Sorry, Marti," I tell her. I kiss her cheek and it is cold. Or is it my lips?

When Marti sent out the second letter to the publisher, to fill the time on a rainy afternoon, she asked the same questions as in the previous letter. Now she gets another reply. She has just finished reading it when I return from work one day. She hands it to me.

"In your note of August 2, you give your address as 2701 Hinden, whereas in previous correspondence it was listed as 2701 Hinden *Place*. Would you please clarify this discrepancy at your earliest convenience? It is essential that our file be accurate in this regard."

It is written by the first person Marti had dealt with, when the book was accepted.

"I don't believe it," Marti says. "I just don't believe it. It's the computer thing all over again. Do you think there's really anybody out there? Any live human beings?"

I have to take her out to dinner that evening, to make her forget the letter. She can hardly sit on the straight chair because of her belly, and she has two pieces of lime pie for dessert.

I sit up alone after she has gone to bed later. I punch on the TV and watch some of the late news. It is about the Paris Peace Talks. The American is making a plea for negotiation while the Vietnamese scribbles a note to a colleague, not listening. When the oriental rises to hurl oft-repeated insults, not mentioning the points raised by the American, the American sits picking his ear with a tie clasp. I punch the set off again.

Watching the dead tube, a gloom falls over me. I have the off-feeling

in my stomach again, the one I experienced at the party. The evidence is all around me. The din is increasing and its impact is lessening. Does a falling tree in the forest make a noise if there is no ear to hear it? I make up theories, sitting there. Is it a built-in self-destruct mechanism which is natural to the evolutionary process, as exhibited in dinosaurs and lemmings? Is hysteria deafening us? Are we all the unwitting victims of mercury or other poisoning, with our powers of communication being eroded away with every bite of food we eat, every drink of water?

Before I can come to a decision on Apex, another envelope comes in the mail, and inside it is a summons to court in Hartford. I am shocked and angry again, but this time fear is dominant.

"I have to go to Hartford," I tell Marti. "They can take a default judgment. They can levy on our property."

"They can't!" Marti protests. "This is America, the land of freedom and justice. A man is innocent until proved guilty."

"I'd better go see them," I tell her.

Marti stays at home and watches *The Secret Storm* and eats lime pie. I take a train to Hartford. When I speak to them at Apex, they are very friendly, very calm. I speak with a small man named Arnold. That is his last name. His first name is Bancroft. He wants to compromise the claim at first, split it down the middle for expediency, but I insist he check his records.

"Your conclusion just may be sound," he says finally, looking up from a manila folder that he guards defensively. "It may be that you really are not Frank Giroux."

I clench my fist at my sides and try to keep my voice calm. "I am Frank Giroux. But I am *not* the Frank Giroux who owes money to the Barnholt Department Store. The distinction is a simple one."

The small man glances guardedly into the folder once more. "Tell you what," he says, looking up at me brightly. "I believe you. You just forget the whole matter. Ignore any further communications from this end for a while." A tight grin. "I'll straighten it all out."

"You're sure?"

He tightens the grin, pityingly. "Of course."

I am gone from the place for a half hour before I realize the man made no attempt at an apology.

In the next few days we pack Marti's hospital case and we are ready. Marti is a balloon with arms and legs. She is pleased that my visit to Hartford has straightened out the whole ugly mess, and she concentrates on producing our child. Five days after my return from Hartford, I am on the way to the hospital with Marti. She is having rhythmic contractions of the uterus.

The admitting doctor is bespectacled and tall and is straining to hear

the professional football game on a radio in the reception area, as he examines Marti.

"How long do we have?" I say loudly, over the noise from the radio. I move between him and the door to the reception area. "Do you use synthetic morphines? How high do you estimate her uterine inertia to be?" I am jumpy.

The doctor cranes his neck around me to hear the pass play develop on the radio. "That was a thirty-seven rollout pass pattern," he tells me confidentially. "You sure can't beat old Broadway Joe when he's hitting his receivers. That makes nine out of thirteen, with that completion. Try to beat that."

I glance apprehensively toward Marti, who gives me a reassuring smile. I am glad that this man is not the O.B.

"He does all that with a surgically improved knee, too," the doctor confides in me, conspiratorially. "Did you happen to catch the game against the Chiefs last week?"

"Doctor," I say. "About my wife—"

He winks at me and grins, slapping my arm as he turns to put an instrument down on a nearby table. "I can tell you like pro ball. It gets in a man's blood, doesn't it?"

Marti is taken to the labor room a short time later, and I join two other expectant fathers for the wait. The two men are moving about the waiting area restlessly, both smoking extra-long cigarettes. They meet in the middle of the area, duel with the cigarettes momentarily, and move on. I grab a chair and take out some unopened mail I had brought along from home.

"Just the doctor alone is five hundred," the first smoker is saying to the other one. "You got any idea how little of the whole thing is picked up by insurance?"

"She says Darryl," the other man says, "but I hate to name him after a relative. Besides, you name a kid Darryl and he gets his face punched in."

I sort through the letters, and stop on one. My heart jumps in my chest. It is from the court in Hartford. My mouth goes dry as I tear the long envelope open, and see the legal paper. A default judgment has been entered, and I am staring numbly at a writ of execution on my house.

I drop the paper to my lap. I remember the smug grin when the man named Arnold (last name) assured me that all would be well. If I ignore this communication, as he suggested, my house will be put up for sale at a public auction, and probably bought by the Apex people for a nominal sum to satisfy the judgment.

I look up at the pacing pre-fathers, and see the blank looks on their faces. Everything will be all right, I tell myself. I shall contact an attorney, and tell him the whole silly story, and he—. I think of the doctor in the receiving room, and a small chill creeps into me, and the feeling comes

over me again. When I tell the story to the attorney, will he hear me? Will anybody ever hear, in time to save our home? One of the fathers-to-be walks up to me now, barking something into my face. He is talking about medical costs, or insurance companies, I am not sure, and his fear-filled eyes glint psychotically at me.

I interrupt him. "It isn't as if there's nothing I can do about it," I tell him. "It's just a writ, they haven't actually sold the house yet. Everything will come out all right, I'm sure of it. It's just a matter of—"

The man has turned away, mumbling about spiralling costs. Now the thing in my stomach comes back strong. I did not listen to him. I did not really hear a thing he was saying. A wild panic rises in my chest, a feeling of cold clamminess. I sit forward on my chair.

"What?" I yell hysterically at the pacing man. "What did you say?"

But he is talking with animated gestures at the other man now and does not hear my voice. I sit there staring then, and something works its way up from the place in my stomach like a sweaty hand.

Maybe it will all break down completely. Maybe the time is here for this other pregnancy. Maybe, there in the delivery room, when the O.B. pulls my son out of his mother's womb and slaps him on his red backside—there will be no one in the whole wide world to hear, to understand, his high-pitched and terrified cry.

The Great Divide

• Frances Colvin

Flung back by the mountains, I rang like a bell;
Along, alone, along;
Peripheral sky like a copper gong
Echoed the thunders I stood among.
A cyclone twisted the afternoon.
Roads raised the dust before knotted eyes
Of strangers who could not understand;
Sunflower wheels that brought them there
Concealed the nature of the land.
They saw with their mouths; with oh-shaped lips
They drank up cloudbursts in tentative sips.
Behind them loomed in the eastern sky
Old obelisks they worshipped by.

I hiked to the west that lay over the hill:
Lodestone, lodestar, lodestone;
Miles measured fences and umber herds,
The sun came out from a cloud of words.
Condors are wide-winged western birds;
They seize, when land below is bare,
Some revelation from the air.

The Home Place

• John C. Evans

Ed didn't help with chores that night at all;
He thought, you go and do them. You're the one:
You always rule the big job or the small
And know just how the farming should be done.
You're bound to clear the pasture maple grove
And put it into corn; but there it ought to stay.
It's old, and Father's plan. Why, when I drove
The cows up after milking yesterday
I stopped a while to watch, stayed on a good
Half hour; two robins and a jay were there
Fighting it out. If we cut down that wood,
A thousand birds are going on somewhere.

He walked back toward the house and stood a while
Beside the gate, feasting his sullen eyes
On all those fields he loved, the wide half mile
Of waving acres. Henry had been wise
Perhaps, he thought, in wanting it all corn
And not a little clover, for the smell;
But even now he thought of Henry's scorn
And writhed a little. "Perfume we can't sell!"
Henry was like that. "Milk the brindle cow;
She's an easy milker and so won't tire your hands."
Ed thought he'd have to get away somehow
If all these were his elder brother's lands.

Ed turned as Henry came into the yard,
And started in; it would be time for bed.
"Kid, I guess maybe you think I'm sort of hard."
"Hard? Why do you ask me?" "Don't you, Ed?"
"Well, I don't know. You always know what's best.
You've got the only system worth a thing."
Ed looked away. A star was in the west.
A tree toad somewhere started in to sing.
"I'll tell you, Ed. Somehow we don't make sense.
So many ways. Right in the best corn zone
You wanted me to leave that old rail fence.
Ed, would you like to run the farm alone?"

Silence built up between them like a wall.
Then Henry's voice went on. "I haven't said,
But Amy's going to marry me this fall,
And I can farm her father's place instead;
And you and I—we'll quarrel soon or late."
Ed became swiftly conscious of the prick
Of barley beards and stood as though the weight
Of all the farm were on him. He felt sick
For just a moment. Oh, he wanted to—
No use to feel afraid. He'd say yes now;
Of course there'd be a world of things to do,
But Henry would be near to tell him how.

Highway Man

• Martin Galvin

I harvest failure all along this road while crows
circle and dip, fluttering black wailers cawing woe.

This morning's haul is harrowing.
These broken bodies, pheasant, skunk, sparrow,

need mending more than I have time to spare.
I gather rags and tags of bone, frozen stares

of disbelief. Sometimes I think the two night eyes
of trucks, impossibly wide, hypnotizing,

while thirty tons of metal hurtle onto two
pounds, more or less, of life. For the few,

this road's a nightmare dying. Cars, morning-sighted,
steer around the bodies. The drivers' eyes look right,

getting to work. My work's the waking of the dead.
My truck, their funeral bier, blinks a requiem.

I gather heaps of skin and rags of broken bones.
Apart from men, I mourn this morning's haul alone.

Transmutations

• T. Alan Broughton

I've worn this hump
for forty years
and should be
used to it.
Maybe it's not
so much myself
as others untrained
to see me as I am,
whose eyes
assume a look
I can't neglect,
wondering
as I often do
what my mother's
face did when she
rose from ethered
sleep to see
this bend,
in minor form.
She too learned
to overlook it,
and no one fixes
quite so squarely
on the eyes
as those who talk
to hunchbacks.
But often lying
on my face at night
I fall away
and find a green
flat field
where running
fleet and straight
I feel it drop
and then I turn
to leap it
like some hummock
in the grass
until, grown restless,
I turn again
and wake to find me
lying twisted
on my back,
ever and ever
resuming
my former shape.

Three Poems by Nina Sandrich

The Difference

The birds have left. I think the crows
Were last to fly. No minute sound of bees
Resounds; my flowers withered long ago.
Their roots curled, helpless, and the trees
Were claws, imploring. If men still scream or
sing

I do not know it, do not hear or mark
Their passing, locked in a different listening.

Earth lunges blind and listlessly she spills
Her seas like tears, salt-lick on fallow fields.
The yellow dusk is thick now; it enfolds
All memory of sun and moon and stars. Strange
harvest yields

A serpent bounty; thought lies curled
About me as I cower, caught among the coils
Of dreams mislaid and lost within a different
world.

No children play. Their twilight cries
Impaled my heart just yesterday. Across this land
Their fossil footprints etch the sand. Dust
sleeps

On open eyes. I watch my isolated hand
Close empty on itself and overhear my breath,
A bestial panting rasped from alien chest.
When life has gone, we live a different death.

A Game of Hop-Scotch

Watch them now! Don't turn away!
See how the little girls white-chalk
strict cabalistic patterns
on the smooth gray squares of Time.
Their metal talisman tokens,
all of gold or silver linked,
flash through the dense green summer shade,
glint strangely where they lie.

What rites and rules are these which make
a mis-step ground for banishment
to where there waits . . . where something
waits. . . .

where hidden presence prowls,
patrols outside those fragile lines?
And you still think it's play?
You still refuse to recognize
what's shining from their secret eyes?

I tell you that there's something there;
I tell you what I've always known: obsessed
eternal little girls are hopping, hopping,
hopping
down the block-hewn steps of centuries.
Something's pulling, something's pushing
them from all their ancient past
into their irrevocable
and dark possessed tomorrows.

Bon Appetit

In an old tale told to children lives a man
whom passion led perverse. For his delight
young maidens he would woo and win and then,
when words cajoling held them to his will,
with grace and flare he'd carve their tender
bodies and regale his appetite for terror.
His taste was for rare meat—still hot
and trembling on the plate.

This Mr. Fox stands without peer
in sanguinary feasting!

Take care, my gentle love, when thirst
leads you to gulp salt blood from crystal.
This vintage is too dry for taste
seduced too long to sweetness. Just sip
the poison steeped within and, as you reel,
try to dislodge the cunning bone which chokes.
Devour the bitter sinews of my heart?
You'll find that takes some chewing!

When you presume to dine on me,
I well may be your destiny.

And Meet Your Maker There

• Thomas A. West, Jr.

They appear: Jack Meyer and Janet Pierce. I never summon them, God knows, but regularly, even seventeen years after we were seniors at Wrentham College, their bodies flash by like the movement of large bats, and sometimes their faces stick: flattened white-skinned decals on a windshield embedded in my brain. It's difficult to concentrate on my driving through life, needless to say ("Then don't say it," my English instructor would have said—but I must. When a man's wife—a wife he loves more than anything on earth, has to interrupt his recollections with a hand on his arm, gently, as she passes hors d'oeuvres to good friends, then he has to say everything here, on paper).

It was when he was seated slouched over in one of the booths next to a window, looking out as if he saw nothing at all, that I remember Jack Meyer best. Scrawny, odd-looking; delicate nose and mouth—almost effeminate, yet with black eyes darting nervously like a jungle fighter; staring, softening, angry, sarcastic, vindictive, philosophical; and that scarlet cheek scar . . .

I was afraid of his tongue as I was awed by his mind. How difficult it must be for a genius to make contact with the world, how impatient he often is, in the company of minds revolving at thirty-three-and-a-third r.p.m.s when his spins at seventy-eight.

It was a bleak, typical February day when I joined him in the booth by the window in our favorite campus coffee shop.

"s'keerG," he said in a flat tone.

"What?" I suspected a new alien greeting.

"That's 'Greek's' spelled backwards, just in case anybody cares."

Jack got up and shuffled to the counter. "Hey, Greek, you got any more coffee?"

A grizzled head poked itself around the threshold of the back room. "Sure, Genius Jew, help yourself."

"Nobody plays a straight man nowadays. What a hell of a place this is. Serve yourself, Genius Jew," Jack imitated, and, having done so, he fed the juke on his way back to the booth. June Christy's "Lonesome Road" began.

"What a hell of a place to be in winter," he continued. "I shouldn't be here. I should be in Majorca. Polynesia. Cannes. . . ."

"Look down, look down, that lonesome ro-ad—"

"But no. Wrentham Falls, Ohio, that's where I am, basking at the Greek's, turning a slow mocha tan and wondering when Eustacia Vye and the Reddleman will plod into view over the heath and wastelands. . . ."

"and me-et your ma-ker there—"

". . . waiting for the sunrise like the rest of the world." Jack suddenly marched to the machine, banged it once, twice, and the record skipped. It had been stuck on lonesome, lonesome.

"I almost forgot," he said, returning. "I have something I wanted you to look at."

Jack always started out this way when leading into his writings. During classes he wrote prodigious amounts, pouring his feelings out on any subject from death to happiness, and frequently he came with fresh material, shoved it across the table toward me, and then waited, impatiently smoking my cigarettes, and interrupting with "Haven't you finished *that* yet?" or "Chris, you're the only guy I know who gets tired lips when he reads."

Strangely, he never wanted the stuff back. "You keep it," he'd say. "I can't keep track of the damned things." It was his manner of giving. He couldn't express gratitude or show kindness directly, or congratulate, let alone praise. If he liked a person, he would insult him, and show him the prose and poetry of Jack Meyer. I seemed to be the only person he liked.

I still have every page he ever gave me. This one is typical:

yes well while i was in the service i marched up
tight with boots and belt so bright they'd wink like
eagles in the sun i'll tell you something else by jesus
men when they march or stand at attention are stripped
stark bare-ass they're alone all together now full of
brotherhood dreaming orange juice and teats when they
shuffle down the company street

And so it went, scribbled, scattered, violent and pounding right up to the final oath which I refuse to print here.

"Well, Chris, my fellow brain,—what do you think?"

I always dreaded the question, which I always felt was completely unfair. And I always told him (except once; that incident appears later in the narrative) I thought it was good. I didn't say I was concerned over his lack of sanity — yet perhaps I wasn't. It's been so long ago, I may now be inserting doubts I never harbored until the terrible ending.

On this particular day we wound up discussing a senior, Janet Pierce, whom we had admired from a distance for three-and-a-half years.

"Why not introduce ourselves to her tonight?" Meyer suggested. "I mean, we only live once, and Korea will see to it we don't live very long, so why not grab the ball by the horns and—"

"The *ball*?"

"Well, then, as the expression goes, let's have a bull."

"Okay, Jack, but what in hell to say to her."

"Well, lessee. We could ask her if she saved peach-stones during the second world war."

"Sure. sure. We'll do just that."

We went from the Greek's to Dave's Grille, and had the usual, for us: hamburgers, and about six draft beers apiece (by usual, of course, I mean once a week).

"Let us be off to see Janet Piersh," Jack said at midnight. I agreed, on the strength of 3.2 percent, times six.

"You mean it?"

"Sure. Why not?"

He stared at me open-mouthed. "You're such a lousy Conservative Republican Cream-Puff, such a N'er-do-wellian creep that I never dreamed you'd relaxsh the old limbs—"

"I'm girdling my learnz."

"The expression is guiding the loins."

"You're from Brooklyn, not Detroit."

"Onward, Christoph."

That urged us to sing "Onward Christoph Soldiers" down Wrentham's main street until we got to the dormitory where we finally aroused notice by heaving snowballs at what we supposed was Janet's window. An unfortunate creature in curlers promised to inform our girl that we had arrived to save her from, at the least, the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. Janet came to the back door just as we were about to give up. She was suddenly there in the threshold, squinting into the glare of the porch light. We stumbled up the stairs, sobering, and when she didn't back away we stopped short, breathing in the delicious perfume.

"Hello. You're Christopher and Jack, aren't you."

We were quiet for an embarrassing length of time.

"Yessum," Jack said finally. "I'm Meyer, and this thing beside me is Thompson. Ah—we were wondering if you saved peashstones during the war."

I was drunk no longer, and thoroughly shamed. She didn't laugh. Then she said something to the effect that yes, as a matter of fact she had been saving them, had four orange crates full of them in her attic at home, plus one steamer trunk and a cigar box with scraps from the table (but that didn't count, as everyone in his right mind knew); and she had wondered for simply eons why she'd gone to the trouble of gathering the stones, and wasn't it nicely marvelous, now she'd found two such really swell individuals who cherished the same cult.

Such was the beginning of Janet, Jack and me, and the beginning of the end of all of us.

Through the rest of February and into March we barely noticed the settling down and plowing aside of winter, or the coming of more insistent and convincing sunlight, and the exposure of long-forgotten grass.

We went to movies. From the corners of my eyes I used to stare at her by filmlight, trying to study her profile as she observed the acting up there: a thousand seats and miles away. Once she caught me at it, and I blushed furiously in the darkness, but she smiled, wriggling over closer to me, and whispered, "hi—how are *you*." And I just about burst, incapable of saying anything more than "fine" which came out a squeak that might as well have announced to the world I was about ready to become a man.

The change in Jack was subtle enough, to me. I was blinded to all but a handful of impressions: how he sat on the other side of her at the movies and at certain classes—as far removed as he could get; how he stood awkwardly to one side, looking away when I held her coat or said goodnight.

During the day it was all right, Jack being there. Evenings—well, I began fighting down jealousies and outrage, yet I didn't dare say anything for fear of losing them both—and who was I, compared to him? Why should I be so presumptuous in my envy? Why indeed. For all I knew, they were in love and impatiently waiting for *me* to leave!

I saw another side to him. He was quieter, with far less bluff and thunder. If he wrote essays and poetry, I never saw either. He held doors open, got us coffee and paid for it, offered us cigarettes and lit them, kept his dorm room neat, shaved and showered and combed his hair and cleaned his nails and even dressed up for classes.

I sensed, of course, that he dreamed as I did: dreaming of her in between side glances at her face down to her perfect legs which showed strength and clear exquisite tan from knee to ankles. The suggestion of the rest drove us half insane, I think, but that is a ludicrously poor choice of words, as you will see.

Then, overnight, Jack changed again, and with that mercury which was always a part of him, he plunged into hard liquor and women. I saw very little of him; only once or twice to wave at across a campus path. Rumors had it he was going up to Gorham for the Hotel Jimmy girls, a tough group of whores in business mainly for the steel mills.

Jan and I went our way as April hustled spring. We took countless strolls along countless paths surrounding Wrentham; or stood smoking and talking under trees or on the library steps, suddenly wondering where the day had gone.

On hot cloudless days we bicycled to the Quarry where we had picnics and where we swam—and, basking, one day when we had cut classes, I studied her; stretching, still or moving; eyes squinting closed, then relaxing, lids fluttering; lips parted, delicately open, and when I

kissed her they opened more to move against my pressure, as did her perfect legs and her boyish hips and her hard, contracting stomach and her round young breasts spreading against my weight.

When it was over, after long minutes of silence while our minds and breath came easier to us, we talked, looking up at the dogwood leaves against the faultless sky.

"I love you."

"Oh," I recall her saying: "why did you tell me that?"

"Because I do."

"I don't know about telling a person you love him."

"Well, it's trite, for one thing."

"Janet: don't, please, give me that crap."

"'Crap' is a disgusting word."

"Would you rather have me use—"

"Stop it!" She rolled over against me, putting a moist palm over my mouth. I started kissing it so she pulled away.

"Do you love me?" I asked.

"Obviously, I wouldn't be out here, would I? I wouldn't see you all the time, would I? At the expense of my reputation and education and religion, would I? But why do I have to say 'I love you'—isn't it understood? Words are so unimportant, really. Actions are the true meaning of life. There. You like that? Another truism from J. P.'s Folksy Almanac."

"Okay, Jan, I won't say it any more."

She feigned disappointment. "Then how will I know you've stopped loving me?"

"God, just like a woman. Anyhow, I won't stop."

"Oh, yes," she said, frowning, and her voice sounded so small, so distant. "You'll go to Korea from here, won't you."

"Probably. But like Doug MacArthur, I'll return."

"Or fade away."

"Listen: we could get married. I'm serious. I'm that serious."

Janet looked utterly sad, and she lectured me, then. "Don't start talking of marriage, Chris," she said. "It's so unrealistic. We'll go our separate ways—you into the army, and me—I don't know. Barb Hale wants me to go to New York with her, and get a job."

"What would you do?"

"Don't sound so depressed!"

"Why shouldn't I? I proposed to you, and all you do is go to New York City with a roommate."

"We're too young. I don't want to marry just now. I want to see the world, or a little of it at least, before getting trapped with babies, ironing, washing clothes and dishes and diapers."

"Trapped?"

"Yes, damn it, trapped. I want at *least* five years of batting around.

Europe, Africa even—and I want to be *free*, not tied down.”

I grew morose, and finally said, “I wonder how many ‘I want’s’ you just came out with.”

Our first argument. The second emerged on the way back to her dorm one evening, when I, stupidly enough, got her talking about Jack.

She blurted out, “I’ve been thinking about him day and night, Chris.”
“Oh? Really?”

“Yes. I’m guilty as hell, and more important, I’m worried about how he is, why he’s gone off the deep end—”

“Jack can take care of himself. He’s from the slums of Detroit, didn’t he tell you? It’s us pampered rich boys you have to watch over.”

“Be the least bit serious. Now he can’t either take care of himself.” She stopped strolling and looked into my eyes. “He’s sick, Chris. Jack needs help—psychiatric help, and short of that he needs us, the way it was before we broke up. Hon, I realize it’s going to be difficult, but—”

“The *three* of us?”

“He needs help, Chris.”

I waited for another couple to pass us by.

“He’s your best friend,” she insisted.

“He’s not. He doesn’t give a damn about me or you or anyone on earth. Let’s face it: he’s an egocentric Hamlet, and I was a jerkwater Horatio who—”

“Chris Thompson, that’s the most unkind thing I’ve ever heard you say. Jack gave me up. He could have stuck around; he could have pursued me or hung around us; I know good and well he loves both of us.”

“Ah. Now we get to the heart of the matter.”

“Meaning?”

“Meaning nothing particular. Let’s forget it.”

She began to cry, then, I was at a complete loss, but to stop her sobbing I promised that I’d hunt Jack up, that we’d mend fences, and I would do all I could to help him. Such assurances calmed her down, yet they did not remove the look of betrayal in her eyes, as if I had already left her brother on the field of battle, wounded and alone.

When I saw him it was at the Greek’s, of course, during the final term and directly before exams. At first I put on an act for Jan’s sake, and I must admit, when I saw him I was ashamed. Jan’s worried about you, I said to him.

“Tell her I’m fine.”

“The hell you are. We’ve been so concerned—”

“How exquisitely noble of you.”

“What you do, Jack, is not only your business. I haven’t interferred with your lousy drinking, and I haven’t once moralized about the company you keep; I haven’t analyzed your behaviour, but I haven’t accepted it as part of you, either.”

"So?"

"Oh for God's sake: why am I here?"

"You tell me, it's your show."

"Why did you leave us,—why?"

He laughed loudly. "Why has it taken you so long to protest?" he asked, immensely pleased with himself.

"We care about you, damn it; you can't simply slam a door on three years of friendship."

"My dear Christoph. It was perfectly, totally and irrevocably obvious that you and Miss Pierce wanted to be alone."

During the silence that followed, I felt that he loved Jan more than I, more than I ever could have loved her. How it must have tortured him to think of being with us again. How he must have walked by himself across campus, hearing lovers in the shadows of the nights; walking past them, his head down and his loneliness magnifying itself; how he must have opened the door to his single room, entered, closed it, locked it, gone to his dresser, removed a quarter-filled fifth of bourbon, and swigged some of it straight. I can imagine, even now, his looking into the cheap mirror fastened to the bureau; staring at the deep lines under his swollen eyes, at the scar, at the unshaven, puffy yet somehow gaunt face; picture him glaring at the face and saying to it, "You worthless bastard."

Toward the middle of exams I saw him once, and for the third-to-last time. Jan had an oral in humanities, so I was free and I thought I'd kill an hour at the Greek's. Jack was—well, I was shocked. There were enormous circles under his eyes, black and violet, and the eyes themselves had lost all sense of energy. There seemed to be a pale film over them; I say seemed because if there were drugs in those days, none of us knew about them.

He hardly noticed when I sat down opposite him. I don't believe there was pretense involved, and certainly all his humor was gone. I noticed that the crimson scar was more vivid, the face more drawn, and I wondered when he'd last seen the sun. A reek of alcohol was on him. He had let grow a beard and a mustache—or the grim beginning of them in two weeks' time—and his clothes were hung loosely on him, as if all he had were stuck and protruding bones assembled haphazardly to imitate a straw man with its frame of branches and twigs.

"Hello."

"Take off, Thompson; soar up the sky, up the ass of God so you can drop your innumerable turds on what's left of civilization."

"A second ago I thought all of your sense of humor was evaporated."

"It is. I'm deadly serious. Beat it."

"What are those papers there?"

Jack's eyes narrowed. He leaned toward me and whispered "*They're papers!*"

"The usual—"

"Words, words, words. Now, good fellow, you are to say, 'What is the matter, my lord?'"

I said it.

"'Between who?'"

"I mean, the matter that you read, my lord."

"Slanders, sir: for the satirical rogue says here . . . that we are all God-kissing carrion, and one day will breed maggots in a dead dog like the sun gave birth to earth."

"You got it twisted, Hamlet."

"Nay, not Hamlet. I am but a simple Jew. Hamlet was a Dane, and a Christian, two counts thoroughly against him."

"Meyer, you look like hell."

"Hark! I hear a Christian speak! Yes, what would you have me do, Chris Christian? Gain weight, sleep, sleep alone, eat properly, get my vitamins, lay off booze, do calisthenics, prepare for Korea, smile? God. You're all alike. Full of motherhood. Take care of yourself, Jack old chum, because we're all worried about you, which means in reality, I'm worried about me so don't rock the boat, buddy, don't get me upset because I don't like to listen to other people's troubles, I got enough of my own and I am *not* my brother's keeper. My mother said it to me. Jan said it to me. You're saying it to me. So I look like hell, I happen to be more attracted to it than to heaven When I toast to the world now, buddy, I say 'Sheol'."

He drew in a breath, and suddenly asked, "How's Janet?"

"I— —why, she's fine."

"Here's a poem. Go on. Read it. Just like old times, right? Before, before it all happened . . . hell, read it."

I read his poem.

we are one
minus half ourselves
never
Whole
and that my friend
is why we come to zero.
mathematically
we enlarge in years
which lull us into dreams
of being more than half
a man. Thus
subtraction becomes us
Most. The hands we join
are but our own,
wringing desperation.

"Well, Christian, what's your idea?"

"I don't like it."

"Ah! Hey, Greek! HE DOESN'T LIKE IT!!"

"Sit down, Jack."

"He says sit down to me, Greek."

The Greek came out, squinting at us. "So sit, then."

Jack then bowed elaborately to each of us, and obeyed. A nervous freshman and his date paid for their coffee and left.

"See? See? I lose bus'ness on accounta you."

"I am your business, Greek: don't forget me, ever." He was enraged. As he spoke, spittle came from his mouth. The Greek noticed, shrugged his shoulders, and retired to his back room. Jack then turned on me.

"You don't like the poem any more than you like Truth, and I can't stand you, so we're even, except it strikes me as ludicrous to weigh you on the same scales."

"Jack, for God's sake, what happened?"

"Nothing. Except when I went home on a long class-A pass weekend I saw a woman in a hospital who has always claimed to be my mother, and she had tubes sticking out of her nose and her gut. She had bottles of bile all around her and the sense of antiseptic death all around her and she smiled and said Jackie, take care of yourself."

"Nothing, except I saw a man who isn't a man anymore drinking his guts out in a cold-water flat and he's supposed to be my father who was a writer only he never published because he had pride, he said, and conceit, which he never said, and he's dying thinking he's going to be published posthumously, and that great things will be said of him, only he can't write because his hands are trembling all day long and when I saw him he said over and over to me, Jack, help me, in the name of God."

"Nothing, Christian, nothing is wrong, nothing has happened. Now go hold hands with your whore."

I was moving instinctively before I realized I had already hauled him across the table, upsetting ash trays, papers and coffee cups. I held him with my left hand, fingers around his throat. The other fist smacked into his face, and when I let him go he slid backward into a sitting position as if nothing had happened to him—yet his nose was suddenly smeared with blood, and he wiped more from his mouth with a pathetic gesture. He was meek. He smoothed his manuscripts; with trembling hands like his father's, he picked up the unbroken crockery and ash trays. Without another word or glance, Jack left, leaving the stack of writings with me.

The next day during a comparative lit seminar, he put on quite a show. Jan and I, we all listened in complete silence as he spoke. Professor Wilkins, face drained of color, did not interfere, but allowed Jack's low, steady, droning voice to continue. Much of his speech is garbled in my memory, for little of it made sense. For example, his references to Plato and Berkeley were in reverse; Dante wrote *Hamlet*; Aristotle, *De rerum*

natura—at least, those were two of his “quotes from reliable sources.” More significantly, reality was death; Hitler was real, not Christ; Himmler was truth, not St. Francis. He mentioned a Court of Conscience in which the Genghis Khans and Tamerlanes went free; the creators, the peacemakers, the meek and humble, were forever damned. He returned and returned to “Ozymandias” for the line, “Look at my works, ye mighty, and despair!”—and to “Ecclesiastes”; to quotes from *Macbeth* and *The Rubaiyat*, and always he arrived at zero as the sum of all existence.

And all we did was sit there with our little silences.

Jack's peroration was as follows—from the hurried notes I scribbled:

I cannot think the way you want me to. I cannot act the way you expect me to act. Society asks everything of a man but manhood. Society, the Great Mother, castrates the youth that it breeds. I for one will not go to Korea, nor will I take exams to go to graduate school to avoid the draft. Nor will I be investigated by a McCarthy Committee, nor remain a Jew nor become a Christian, nor be told by a hydracephalic idiot that my mission in life is to close with the enemy and destroy him, nor be told by an unctuous priest to love him.

Suddenly he looked at me, fixed me with a glare I will never forget, one that I will see in every dream until I die, and then he searched Janet's eyes while his grew tender, as soft and gentle as a father's toward a sleeping girl.

“Christian?” he asked.

I wanted to stand; I couldn't. I wanted to run to him, grab him by the shoulders and shake the living hell out of him, and slap his face to bring him back, but all I did was sit at my table arm chair, pencil in hand, waiting, breathing heavily and wondering what in the name of God was happening.

“Am I, think you, imperially slim?”

Whereupon he stalked from the seminar.

Through the buzzing of voices emerged Professor Wilkins' order: the less said about this, the better, and class is dismissed. Then he called to me.

“Thompson: you're a close friend of Meyer's?”

I nodded.

“Follow him. Catch up to him. Stay with him, and don't let him out of your sight for an instant. I'll contact Dr. Holmes—”

“Sir?”

“And what's your dorm—Lakesly, is it?”

“Yes, 431, fourth floor.”

“Hurry, Thompson, hurry; his life depends on it!”

"His life, sir?"

"The words 'imperially slim,' Thompson: they're from the poem *Richard Cory.*"

* * * *

I remember my lungs close to bursting when I arrived at Lakesly Hall! I remember barging into a girl who rocketed backward into her companion's bicycle, books flying and papers like huge limp playing cards exploding in the air. The Dean of Men, also hurrying, tried to stop me as I took the stairs three at a time, thoughts of Jack, the Greek's, Jan and the Quarry racing with me; and I quoted Robinson's poem but mixed it up with *Miniver Cheevey* who didn't put a bullet through his head at all, but kept on drinking, and that's what I prayed Jack would do: wind up like his father, not kill himself, *not fire through that good mind*.

He wasn't in his room. I waited for him there, and when Dr. Holmes came I listed other places where Jack might be. They tried the Greek's, the other coffee houses, the college snack bar, Dave's Grille, the bus and train terminals, all with no luck. In his room I read a few poems he had written, and I scanned some notes, papers, anything which might be a last message. There was a letter from Jan.

My Dearest,

Are you trying to kill me with your love-poems? Well, I guess you have every right to step on the love I have for you: it was I who destroyed your friendship with Chris. But why do you drink yourself into the ground for nothing; are you trying to spoil my vision of you? You stepped aside and won my heart.

Chris is so unfeeling. I got in an argument with him and he said he couldn't care less about what happened to you, as long as you stayed out of our affairs.

Jack, when can we see each other again? Last Sunday night—or should I say morning!—was a century back. Thank God that Chris is such a Puritan, and faithfully deposits me in my cloistered dorm before porch lights go out.

I love you.

I love you.

Always,
Jan

The extreme coldness which crawled over my skin, was stopped by shouts and a desperate wailing of a siren, then two, joined by a third. I walked to the window in time to see the police, an ambulance and a fire truck, and crowds milling about, where some individuals pointed feverishly, directing gazes of newcomers up to the top of the building. I think

I would have stayed at that spot, but an arm pulled me back from it. It was Dr. Holmes, and behind him were Professor Wilkins and a campus cop I had always disliked for no reason at all.

"You know the guy best?" the cop asked.

"Yes, I guess I do."

"Then let's go."

He led us up three flights and out onto the large flat roof. Jack was on the very edge. His face jerked around when he heard me approach on the gravelly surface. Holmes and Wilkins stayed behind me; I persuaded the cop to wait, while I advanced.

"Oh, stay where you are. Chris old boy."

"Please—"

"STOP."

I did. All I could do was hold out a hand to him.

"Sure. I'll listen. I'll even come back, but after I jump. It'll be history, the second time a Jew had a Second Coming."

"Jack, please—" I took another step.

"Red light! One-two-three Red Light! Did you ever play that, Chris? God," he said, stretching his arms outward. "God I feel delicious, I'm on top of the world, huh, Chris, right? But the Greeks invented gods who got angry with men who tried to fly. Like Icarus and Bellerophon, they threw them down."

"You haven't tried anything yet,—you haven't even grown up. For the love of God, Jack: you have to have more *time*."

"But you see, I shall try very soon now, and there's no time left."

I thought he would fall, then, but something held him, or he held himself. He put a hand to his eyes, then let it drop, and he wavered there, teetering on the edge. His frail weight, his hollow bones could not hold against a gathering evening wind that pulled and sucked and shoved us . . . nor could the bones hold in flight, nor stay together on the ground.

It's gorgeous up here, isn't it?" he cried. "Drink the sweet air; God it makes the blood fry with the rites of every spring that ever graced the earth. I feel so wild, so drunk and wild why I should tear the heart from all the great ideas ever dreamed, and hold it bleeding in my Aztec hand, up to the sun . . . no wonder they worshiped it, no wonder they prayed each night to have it back again and warm their skins . . . Chris?"

"Yes?"

"Is it suddenly cold?"

"No—I don't know."

"It's night that enshrouds me now. Don't let it swarm over you. Chris. Get back. I think I'm leaving now. Wait. Where is she? Where is Jan?" His voice began choking with sobs. "She is a whore, Chris. Why did you hit me? Why?"

He started chanting, softly,

"Look down, look down, that lonesome ro-ad—"
I saw him leap out, his arms spread-eagled, and I tried to block the
enormous shrieking from my brain.

* * * *

To this day I cannot recall the graduation ceremonies. Jan tried to see me once, but I walked away, and I think she knew why. Years later I heard she had settled down with a salesman, and they have several beautiful children.

As for me, I signed up for duty in Korea, which proved nothing. I mean, there was no amount of sacrifice that would bring life back to its original shape, poor as that was. And, oh, I remember Wrentham. I still look through the window where it said "Greek's," and I squint to make out a darkened slight form seated in a booth, fumbling for a cigaret, drinking bad coffee, reading his own writings, and half-listening to Christy singing *Lonesome Road*.

My Father's Chair

● Joseph E. Meredith

for C. F. K.

Carved oak and strong
as sixty winters' fibrous
knittings would allow,
my father's chair,
straight-backed as the man,
hawks my living room
feathered new with dust.

Kite talons grasp
two oak-grained spheres:
sacrifice of field mice
declared *ex-cathedra*.
Its sedentary presence soars
the boundaries of my life
and tears a timid heart.

Contributors

CRICHARD CLEARY has contributed articles here since 1953, most recently a piece on de Gaulle last March. By dint of length of service and depth of analysis, he qualifies as our resident pundit. The current article is part of a projected multi-author book on Anglo-American relations. He is professor of Political Science at La Salle College. DORA M. PETTINELLA, translator of Brazilian poet Cecilia Miereles, has traveled widely in Europe and South America and written many fine translations for U. S. periodicals. MICHAEL PAUL NOVAK'S work has been seen in this and some 30 other literary magazines. RALPH HAYES has published 14 novels and more than 40 short stories; he is new to our pages. FRANCES COLVIN has had her poems in *American Scholar*, *Commonweal*, and *Prairie Schooner*. JOHN C. EVANS first appeared in our November issue, is welcomed again. His poetry has been seen in *Poem*, *Georgia Review*, and the *Chicago Tribune*. MARTIN GALVIN teaches at St. Joseph's College in Emmitsburg, Md. and has published poems in *Spirit*, *Descant*, and *Southern Poetry Review*. T. ALAN BROUGHTON has been a valued contributor over the years to this and other magazines. He is a member of the English Department at the University of Vermont and is working on his first collection of poems. NINA SANDRICH made her debut in our January issue and is more generously represented this time. She lives in North Hollywood, California. This is THOMAS A. WEST'S fifth story in these pages; his last appearance, entitled "The Sincerity of Coby Sedgewick," merited inclusion on Martha Foley's Honor Roll of Distinguished Stories. JOSEPH E. MEREDITH is a young Philadelphia poet whose work has been seen here with some regularity since he first came to our enthusiastic attention in 1970.

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